

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on “H.R. 1900, the Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act”
July 9, 2013

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This subcommittee has held a number of hearings addressing America’s growing natural gas abundance, and two clear messages have emerged – first, that plentiful and affordable domestic natural gas supplies offer many potential advantages, and second, that there is bipartisan support for the development and use of domestic natural gas. Today, we will discuss a critical step in turning these pro-natural gas words into action with H.R. 1900, the “Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act.”

In a number of locations across the country, the existing natural gas pipeline infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the expanding supplies, while approvals for new pipelines often get delayed by state and federal red tape that can last for years. To put it bluntly, the permitting process has not kept up with the times. This problem is especially exacerbated in areas in the Northeast and Midwest as we learned in our natural gas electric coordination hearings earlier this Congress. As more and more of our energy needs become tied to the safe deliverability of natural gas, the need to build new pipeline infrastructure to connect new supplies to existing and new markets becomes more critical.

This is where the “Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act” comes in. This legislation helps to put the federal permitting process on a reasonable schedule with clear deadlines so all federal and state agencies are held accountable and know the rules of the road. I would like to thank my friend and colleague Mike Pompeo for spearheading this commonsense bill.

New natural gas pipeline projects will benefit us in many ways. First, the projects themselves would provide significant numbers of good-paying jobs at a time of chronic high unemployment. And with each completed project, more natural gas can be transported to where it is needed. Countless homeowners and small business owners could benefit from lower gas and electric bills. Natural gas-dependent manufacturers could obtain sufficient supplies to sustain an American manufacturing renaissance. And a more robust pipeline infrastructure would open up promising opportunities to export natural gas supplies to our trading partners around the world.

The opportunities are great, but they could be stalled or even lost for good unless the pipelines start getting built. This legislation helps provide the certainty to ensure these critical infrastructure projects get in the ground without unnecessary delay while at the same time making sure they are protective of safety and the environment.

Natural gas is going to be a big part of our energy future, but only if we cut the red tape from the past. We are a nation of builders, not a nation of bottlenecks. I look forward to this discussion of the “Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act” and advancing this important piece of energy and jobs legislation.

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